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A SPECIAL ACADEMIC CLASS IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

T. W. GOSLING,

Department of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin

The junior high school offers to school administrators an unusual opportunity to provide for the individual aptitudes of children and to train these aptitudes for social service. If the school is small, it is not possible to have extensive classification of pupils according to ability. The only differentiation that is possible in a small school is that which the teacher in the regular course of instruction can provide by means of scientific method which regards the individual pupil rather than the class group as the unit-objective in the teaching process. In large schools classification according to ability and according to the interests and the needs of the children becomes possible.

The purpose of this paper is to give an account of an experimental scheme of classification which is receiving a test in the Lafayette Bloom Junior High School, a unit of the large public-school system of Cincinnati; to record some observations that were made in the course of the first year of the experiment; and to draw some conclusions based upon the experience of the year.

The avowed purpose of the Bloom Junior High School from the time of its establishment in 1915 has been to provide educational opportunities suited to the needs of all kinds of children in their early adolescence. On account of the provisions of the Ohio law which require boys to remain in school until they are fifteen years of age and girls to remain until they are sixteen, the junior high school was organized so as to include the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth grades. By the end of the tenth grade the great majority of pupils are at least sixteen years of age. The organization of the school makes it possible, therefore, to care for the pupils in attendance until most of them have reached the age prescribed by the school-attendance law.

It is a perfectly legitimate function of a school to provide for the needs of children who are going to withdraw as soon as the law will permit and to adjust its curricula to the demands of those who have but little interest in books and who have a large interest in the kind of activities usually associated with industrial and commercial training and with the household arts. To limit a school to the service of pupils of this type, however, is to make a class school of it, to make it an agency which will tend to perpetuate the distinctions between the more favored and the less favored members of society. In other words, a school which interests itself in the welfare of only those children who through lack of interest in study or through the pressure of economic necessity will drop out as soon as the law permits is an undemocratic school; it is likely to increase that very kind of social stratification which the Prussian school system aimed to accomplish and which it is to the interest of a democratic society to avoid.

The best thought regarding the junior high school considers it as the most democratic of all schools—a school for pupils of all types of mind. There is something remarkably inspiring in this association of pupils of all kinds in a common

enterprise. Juxtaposition alone tends to breed sympathy and understanding and thereby to promote social solidarity. In order to broaden the scope of the Bloom Junior High School and to bring its activities into harmony with this broad social purpose, the writer of this article, who was the principal of the school at the time, suggested to the superintendent of schools the organization of a special academic class to be composed of pupils who, at the end of the sixth grade in any of the elementary schools of the city, might be recommended by their principals on account of unusual academic scholarship for classification with a group of children who would undertake to do in the seventh grade some of the work which ordinarily is deferred until the first year of the senior high school—the ninth grade in the school system.

The reason for establishing in the seventh grade a special academic class of gifted pupils rather than an ordinary academic class is given in the letter of the principal to the superintendent of schools as follows:

There is a considerable amount of criticism of the American school because it delays too long the preparation of pupils who wish to enter the professions. American professional men are said to be two or three years older than the men of England, Germany, and France when they enter upon their life-work.

As a result of this condition many bright boys and girls who might render distinguished service in various fields are obliged to forego the advantages of a higher education and to enter upon activities which, though honorable, do not call for the exercise of the peculiar abilities with which they are endowed. If suitable opportunities were offered to boys and girls of this type, they might easily prepare for earlier entrance upon collegiate and professional study. The general result most likely would be to lengthen the period of schooling for many who now drop out early because the goal of their ambitions is too remote.

Since the junior high-school organization is attempting to differentiate its curricula according to the needs of various types of pupil there seems to be no good reason why the accelerant pupil of the academic type should not receive consideration. In the Lafayette Bloom Junior High School it would

be possible to care for a group of boys and girls of this type. In the beginning we should wish to receive into the seventh grade about forty whom the various principals would recommend on the basis of the advantages which might accrue to these boys and girls from entering upon an academic high-school course two years earlier than is now the custom.

This suggestion was approved by the superintendent of schools and adopted by the Board of Education. Accordingly in the spring of nineteen hundred and seventeen the following announcement was sent to all the principals:

SPECIAL ACADEMIC CLASS

The purpose of the academic class at the Lafayette Bloom Junior High School is to give to those pupils who are unusually proficient in their studies and who would like to prepare for a higher education in college and professional school an opportunity to do more advanced work than is possible in classes where they do not need to put forth their best efforts in order to succeed. It is harmful to the intellectual development of boys and girls to permit them to live on a low plane of effort when they ought to be living on a high plane. This statement does not mean that pupils should be taxed beyond their ability and their strength. It means merely that "it is only when we do our best that our best appears."

A class of pupils selected on the basis of ability ought to be able to save a year or two of the time usually required to accomplish the work of the last six years of the public schools. The purpose of this saving should not be to enable boys and girls to leave school earlier than they would under the usual conditions, but to bring college and the professional school nearer and thus within easier reach of those who are most likely to be the intellectual leaders of the community.

The Lafayette Bloom Junior High School will be prepared to organize next September a special academic class of forty seventh-grade pupils from the various schools of the city. These pupils should be of unusual mental ability and of sound health. The curriculum for the first year will be as follows:

	Hours
Physical Training and Hygiene	5
Latin or First-Year German	5
General Science	5
Mathematics	5
English	5
Music	$\frac{1}{2}$
Penmanship	$\frac{1}{2}$
Drawing	2
Household Arts, Girls }	2
Industrial Arts, Boys }	
Total	30

Principals who have pupils who would be likely to profit by this opportunity are requested to fill the blank on the next page and to have the parent signify his approval by affixing his signature.

As a result of this appeal twenty-three pupils who regularly would have entered seventh-grade classes in eleven different schools in widely separated parts of the city were enrolled in the special academic class at Bloom in September. Somewhat later in the year another pupil from the ninth grade of a suburban high school was admitted to the class. Thus the total enrolment was twenty-four.

The original purpose of the principal involved a psychological examination as a basis upon which to determine eligibility for admission to the class. The difficulties that usually are inherent in the beginning of any enterprise made it necessary to abandon this purpose in most instances and to accept the recommendations of principals instead. However, as soon as possible after the organization of the class all the members except the ninth-grade pupil and except the few who had been examined previously were given the usual psychological tests by the vocation bureau of the public schools. It is noteworthy that of the twenty-three pupils who were examined all but one were recommended by the vocation bureau for enrolment in the special class on the basis of the psychological tests. Thus the judgments of the principals were confirmed.

The psychological tests revealed marked differences in ability among the members of the class; for example, the intelligence quotient was found to range from ninety-nine to one hundred and forty-nine. The tests other than those of the Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale showed results of equal interest on account of the range.

The program of studies offered to the class was quite frankly of the ninth-grade type. It differed from the usual ninth-grade program in requiring that one hour be devoted every day to physical training and hygiene; in giving a larger amount of attention to drawing than usually is given; and in including work in the household arts for girls and in the industrial arts for boys. This would seem to be a better-balanced arrangement than the first year of the senior high school usually offers.

No attempt was made to complete all of the conventional work of the seventh and eighth grades. Instead there were bold eliminations of all of the work of those grades that was not needed directly for the successful prosecution of advanced studies. Only so much of the arithmetic was retained, for example, as was necessary to prepare pupils for a successful study of algebra. English grammar, as it was needed, was taught in connection with the study of English literature and composition and also in connection with the Latin in so far as a knowledge of English constructions was essential for a comprehension of the Latin. This method leaves certain gaps in the information of the pupils. The problem to be considered in this connection involves a judgment of the relative importance of the information omitted and of the advanced studies which the children take under the incentive of the new plan.

On October 17, shortly after the opening of the school term, the teachers of the class were asked to give to the principal an estimate of the relative standing of the pupils in each study according to ability. This subjective estimate, made after only a slight acquaintance with the pupils, affords an interesting

means of comparison of the results of the psychological tests, the early impressions of nine different teachers covering the relative abilities of the members of the class, and the actual scholarship records reported by the teachers at the end of the first and the second semesters. Table I arranges the twenty-three pupils according to their intelligence quotients and shows by comparison the estimated ranking in October in each of the four academic subjects and also the ranking according to scholarship marks at the end of the first semester and again at the end of the year. The rankings in subjects other than the academic are not given because these seemed less significant than the rankings in academic subjects and also because the boys and the girls were in separate classes in some of these other subjects. Under these conditions no useful comparisons could be made.

Table II summarizes from Table I the results of the rankings in the four academic subjects and places these results in comparison with the ranking according to intelligence quotients. These summaries are obtained from Table I by adding the corresponding figures in the various columns under the four academic subjects and by determining thereafter the order in which these sums would rank for the group of twenty-three students. The lowest sum would rank number one and the highest sum would rank number twenty-three. For example, by referring to Table I it may be seen that pupil No. 1, who has an intelligence quotient of 149, is given an estimated rank of 17 in English, of 2 in general science, of 2 in Latin, and of 1 in mathematics. These estimated ranks when added together give 22. This figure appears in column 3 of Table II. After the results are obtained for all of the pupils of the class, it is found that 22 is third in order. Pupil No. 8 with a total of 11 is first and pupil No. 2 with a total of 15 is second.

The scholarship records of the class for both the first and the second semesters are given in Table III. These records

are significant because they show not only the relative rank of the pupils, but also the wide differences among the members of the class in accomplishing the work of the year.

TABLE I

PUPIL	INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT	ENGLISH			GENERAL SCIENCE			LATIN			MATHEMATICS		
		Estimated Rank	First-Semester Rank	Second-Semester Rank	Estimated Rank	First-Semester Rank	Second-Semester Rank	Estimated Rank	First-Semester Rank	Second-Semester Rank	Estimated Rank	First-Semester Rank	Second-Semester Rank
1. Boy	149	17	6	9	2	2	3	2	5	11	1	1	2
2. "	137	1	1	2	4	4	3	7	11	11	3	7	5
3. "	136	8	22	...	22	23	...	22	22	...	23	20	...
4. "	134	10	5	5	8	2	1	3	8	7	4	4	2
5. Girl	128	9	16	8	15	12	20	5	18	18	12	15	15
6. Boy	126	4	10	15	17	7	6	13	15	16	15	15	13
7. "	125	4	19	9	3	12	3	20	21	20	5	21	20
8. Girl	124	1	1	1	7	5	7	1	1	1	2	4	1
9. Boy	121	21	21	18	20	18	16	21	12	11	9	13	13
10. "	121	3	4	9	5	1	2	16	20	19	7	1	11
11. "	120	19	16	18	12	12	7	8	12	9	13	12	11
12. "	120	16	10	13	21	20	16	17	18	17	22	21	15
13. "	120	23	20	...	10	12	...	23	23	...	20	19	...
14. "	118	18	13	15	9	7	7	6	3	1	14	10	7
15. "	117	22	23	...	19	12	...	9	16	...	10	8	...
16. "	116	13	6	13	13	11	7	4	16	11	11	8	6
17. "	114	12	13	20	11	6	15	15	4	3	16	11	9
18. Girl	111	15	13	9	23	18	20	11	5	6	18	13	15
19. "	108	14	16	17	14	22	20	19	5	3	19	15	9
20. Boy	108	4	1	4	1	7	13	10	8	15	8	6	7
21. "	106	20	...	...	16	...	...	18	...	...	6	...	...
22. Girl	104	11	8	5	6	7	7	12	10	7	17	23	20
23. "	99	7	9	5	18	21	14	14	12	9	21	18	15
24. Boy*	...	...	10	2	...	17	7	...	2	3	...	1	4

*Pupil No. 24 entered the class late from the ninth grade of a suburban high school. He was not given the psychological tests.

Pupil No. 8 is one of the first to attract attention in a study of each of the foregoing tables. This girl by virtue of her scholarship marks is entitled to a rank much higher than her intelligence quotient gives her. In fact, Table II, which repre-

sents what may be called the consensus of opinion, gives her the first rank in the class. Whether the marks are too high or the intelligence quotient too low, it is very difficult to determine. Though the charming personality of the girl might lead

TABLE II

PUPIL	INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT	Sum of Esti- mates of Rank	Order of Sum of Estimates of Rank	Sum of Ranks for First Se- mester	First-Semester Rank Accord- ing to Sum of Ranks	Sum of Ranks for Second Semester	Second-Semester Rank Accord- ing to Sum of Ranks
1. Boy	149	22	3	14	2	25	5
2. "	137	15	2	23	5	21	4
3. "	136	75	21	87	23	.....	.....
4. "	134	25	5	19	3	15	2
5. Girl	128	41	8	61	18	61	20
6. Boy	126	49	12	47	11	50	15
7. "	125	32	7	73	21	52	17
8. Girl	124	11	1	11	1	10	1
9. Boy	121	71	20	64	19	58	18
10. "	121	31	6	26	6	41	10
11. "	120	52	13	52	14	45	12
12. "	120	76	22	69	20	61	20
13. "	120	76	23	74	22	.....	.....
14. "	118	47	11	33	8	30	6
15. "	117	60	15	59	16	.....	.....
16. "	116	41	8	41	10	37	7
17. "	114	54	14	34	9	47	13
18. Girl	111	67	19	49	13	50	15
19. "	108	66	18	58	15	49	14
20. Boy	108	23	4	22	4	39	8
21. "	106	60	15	.....	.....	.....	.....
22. Girl	104	46	10	48	12	39	8
23. "	99	60	15	60	17	43	11
24. Boy	.....	.....	.....	30	7	16	3

her teachers somewhat to overestimate her accomplishments, it is not necessary to account for the high marks by assuming an error on the part of the teachers, for the attitude of the girl toward her work is sufficient to lift her above the rank where her intelligence quotient places her, even if we assume that this quotient is determined with absolute correctness.

TABLE III

Pupil	INTELLIGENCE Quotient	DRAWING		ENGLISH		LATIN		MATHE- MATICS		GENERAL SCIENCE		PENMAN- SHIP		PHYSICAL TRAINING (Boys)		PHYSICAL TRAINING (Girls)		PRINTING (Boys)		SEWING (Girls)	
		First Semester	Second Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	First Semester	Second Semester	First Semester	Second Semester
1. Boy	149	85	80	90	87	88	83	92	90	93	90	65	80	76	81	...	...	100	85	...	...
2. "	137	85	85	95	93	83	83	85	87	92	90	75	80	85	88	...	...	70	85	...	...
3. "	136	60	...	70	...	60	...	65	...	62	...	60	...	65	...	...	...	70	...	...	...
4. "	134	95	90	92	90	87	88	90	90	93	95	80	85	70	86	...	...	70	90	...	...
5. Girl	128	90	90	82	88	77	72	72	70	78	70	90	100	...	...	92	93	...	...	82	85
6. Boy	126	90	90	85	82	80	78	72	73	83	86	75	80	79	84	...	...	75	85	...	...
7. "	125	90	90	80	87	70	63	63	60	78	90	90	95	66	84	...	...	68	63	...	...
8. Girl	124	90	90	95	95	96	95	90	93	87	85	95	100	...	...	91	93	...	...	89	85
9. Boy	121	90	85	72	77	82	83	73	73	72	71	85	95	74	95	...	...	70	85	...	...
10. "	121	90	90	94	87	75	70	92	75	95	93	80	90	76	80	...	...	85	93	...	...
21. "	120	85	85	82	77	82	85	77	75	78	85	90	100	85	83	...	...	65	80	...	...
12. "	120	90	86	85	85	77	77	63	70	70	71	75	80	69	74	...	...	77	85	...	...
13. "	120	90	...	74	...	56	...	68	...	78	...	85	...	70	...	...	...	55	...	...	...
14. "	118	80	70	84	82	92	95	78	80	83	85	80	90	86	90	...	...	60	90	...	...
15. "	117	70	...	67	...	78	...	82	...	78	...	75	...	92	...	...	...	55	...	...	...
16. "	116	85	85	90	85	78	83	82	83	80	85	70	90	82	85	...	...	70	90	...	...
17. "	114	85	70	84	77	90	93	77	78	85	73	70	80	82	92	...	...	60	78	...	...
18. Girl	111	90	90	84	87	88	90	73	70	72	70	90	95	...	...	90	90	...	...	83	85
19. "	108	90	90	82	78	88	93	72	78	68	70	90	100	...	...	94	95	...	...	85	85
20. Boy	108	90	88	95	92	87	82	87	80	83	81	90	90	79	80	...	...	65	90	...	...
21. "	106	Transferred to Industrial Arts curriculum, October 19.										...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
22. Girl	104	90	90	89	90	85	88	58	60	83	85	95	100	...	...	93	95	...	...	82	88
23. "	99	90	86	87	90	82	85	70	70	70	76	80	90	...	...	94	94	...	...	87	85
24. Boy	....	85	85	85	93	95	93	92	88	77	85	80	85	78	66	...	...	50	85	...	...

The four pupils who did not complete the work of the year make an interesting study. No. 21 after only a few weeks with the class was transferred at his own request to the industrial arts curriculum. This boy had come from Russia only five years previously. The prevailing language of his home is still Jewish. This handicap of language, coupled with the demands on the boy's time outside of school in carrying on remunerative employment, made it difficult for him to maintain a proper interest in his work. Most likely the change to the other curriculum was, in view of all the circumstances, a wise one to make.

Pupil No. 15 failed in part of his work on account of personal dissatisfaction. The cause of this dissatisfaction was never wholly determined. It seemed to be due largely to a wish to resume his relationship with a group of boys with whom he had associated in his former school. He was permitted at his own request to return to the school from which he had come.

Pupil No. 11 was requested to return to his former school on account of the attitude of the home and also because on account of failure in three subjects he did not seem to be likely to succeed.

The most suggestive comparison which the tables offer is to be found in the records of pupils No. 3 and No. 23. In reporting upon the psychological tests, the examiner said of No. 3 that his intelligence quotient—

puts him into the group of very superior children approaching the lower limit of the group which Terman designates as possible geniuses. In his Supplementary tests these findings were corroborated. Only in the Form Boards did he fail to make an extraordinary record for his years. In his Association by Opposites he made a perfect record in a short time, which puts him into the highest 10 per cent of our fourteen-year school boys. In the test of routine learning, Substitution, he made a record well above the average fourteen-year school boy, while in the Trabue Language test he ranked eighteen years old. Altogether M—— is a remarkably able child—among the best that we have had. He should be helped if necessary to secure an education proportionate to his superior powers.

Quite in contrast with this enthusiastic commendation of No. 3 is the following report upon No. 23:

On the Stanford Revision of the Binet Scale, L— passes tests giving her a mental age of twelve years and eight months. This gives her an intelligence quotient of 99 and classifies her as normal. The Supplementary tests tend to confirm this finding, but there are some exceptions. On the A Form Board she made only a seven-year record and in a language completion test she did only as well as a sixth-grade child. However, on the Substitution test, the Opposites, and the Hard Directions tests her record is above twelve years. Her record in such tests as the Induction, Clock, and Code indicates superior power of mental imagery. On the whole, she is developed normally for her age, and her progress through school has been normal. She is well able to do the seventh-grade work, but the tests do not indicate superior ability which would be required in a rapidly moving class.

The subsequent scholastic records of pupils Nos. 3 and 23 do not support the prognostication of the psychological examination. At the end of the first semester, No. 3 had failed in every subject of study but two (70 is the mark required for passing). On the other hand, No. 23 had maintained a passing grade in every subject and had advanced to the seventeenth rank in the class. At the end of the second semester No. 23 had advanced to the eleventh rank. On the advice of the principal, No. 3 had returned to his former school at the end of the first semester.

Personal knowledge of pupils Nos. 3 and 23 affords an explanation of the results in each case. Though No. 3 had all the native ability necessary to make a marked success in his work, he lacked the application, the determination, and the grit that were characteristic of the girl. She knew that she had a difficult task to perform, and she set herself resolutely to achieve success. The boy, on the other hand, was not on his mettle. Apparently he had been accustomed to doing his work without much effort. When there was need of effort, the boy did not respond. Even in the matter of attendance he was very irregular. In other words, the attitude of the boy was

not conducive to success and the boy failed; the attitude of the girl was conducive to success, and she was rewarded with the success which she was determined to gain.

This personal equation is something which psychological tests have not been able to measure. Consequently, psychological tests alone are not a sure guide to the classification of pupils. Classification in fact involves prognosis—a field of psychology which as yet is not developed to an extent that would justify administrators in relying wholly upon it. Meanwhile it is of the utmost importance to remember that the attitude of a child is almost, if not quite, as much a determining factor of success as is his aptitude. It is the duty of the school to cultivate right attitude as well as to develop natural aptitude. Since attitude is a matter of the free will, sometimes, as in the case of Pupil No. 3 of the special academic class, even a favoring environment does not produce the right attitude.

Of the twenty pupils who remained to the end of the year (June, 1918), fourteen passed in all of their subjects, five failed in one subject, and one failed in three subjects. Those who passed in all of the subjects accomplished an amount of work almost equivalent to that which is done in the ninth grade of the senior high school. The deficiency in mathematics was most marked—a deficiency due in part to a change of teachers in the first semester. However, if the same rate of progress is maintained in the second year as in the first, by the end of the second year most of the pupils of the class will be fully prepared to enter the third grade of the senior high school. For this group, therefore, the experiment will result in bringing the date of college entrance nearer by two years than would have been possible under the usual conditions.

If the success of the experiment in the first year had been obtained at the expense of the physical or the mental health of the pupils, success of course would not have been worth the price. No evil effects were noticeable, however, except in the

case of one boy, who overtaxed himself physically in efforts that were in no way connected with the regimen of the school. Careful physical examinations by the school physicians were made twice in the course of the year. As a group, the members of the class were more buoyant and vigorous at the end of the year than they were at the beginning.

This exuberance of spirits may be attributed in part to the daily program of physical training and also to the methods of teaching by which excessive assignments of home work were avoided. The recitations were one hour in length. According to the policy of the school the study-recitation plan was used. Under this plan the hour was devoted to teaching and to learning, not merely to the hearing of recitations for which pupils had prepared at home. The amount of required home work, therefore, was much less than usually is required of high-school students. By so much, then, the nervous tension was reduced.

What the social effect would be if there were a general adoption of the plan which has been followed for the year, it is impossible as yet to know. There is but little doubt that the effect upon the members of the group which formed the basis of the experiment has been good. They have had a joyous and successful experience which has brought to them returns which they could not have obtained in any other way. Before passing final judgment upon the plan, however, we need to know whether the separation of the members of the group from the classes to which they had belonged has had a deleterious effect upon those who remained.

About all that can be said at the present time is that classification is one of the effective means of avoiding the retardation of pupils. Correct classification will make it possible for all to proceed at a rate of speed which is determined by their abilities. With correct classification, there will be no failures and no retardation. Surely the social advantage would

be great if the losses from failure and from retardation could be eliminated. In any scheme of scientific classification a special academic class will have a place, for it undoubtedly meets the needs of certain types of mind. It remains for the psychologists and the school administrators to develop a scheme of classification which will meet the needs of all types and which will adjust the scheme to both social and individual needs.